

2-10-2006

## Interview with Martin Yoder

Alexander Bogdanov

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digital.kenyon.edu/fft\\_interviews](https://digital.kenyon.edu/fft_interviews)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bogdanov, Alexander, "Interview with Martin Yoder" (2006). *Interviews*. 23.  
[https://digital.kenyon.edu/fft\\_interviews/23](https://digital.kenyon.edu/fft_interviews/23)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Food for Thought at Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Interviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Kenyon: Research, Scholarship, and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact [noltj@kenyon.edu](mailto:noltj@kenyon.edu).



**Accession number:** FFT-MS-TR-BOGDANOV-021006

**Corresponds to audio:** FFT-ME-SR-BOGDANOV-021006

**Transcribers name:** Alexander Bogdanov

**Event:** Transcript of Interview with Martin Yoder

**Place:** Yoder Trucking and Livestock, 10084 Lincoln Way E, Orrville, OH

**Date:** recorded Thursday, February 10, 2006; transcribed May 07, 2006

**Co-workers present:** none

MY – *Martin Yoder – Buyer, owner, Yoder Trucking and Livestock*

AB – *Alexander Bogdanov*

AB: February eleventh, two thousand six, interview with Martin Yoder.

AB: So, um, I'm interested a little bit about, uhm, yourself, before I ask questions about the, auctions. Could you tell me how you got into this business.

MY: My father owned a couple auctions and I've been involved all my life, since I was twelve, thirteen years old.

AB: So, uh, could you tell me a little bit about the business of independent bidders and how that, how that works.

MY: You either buy cattle on commission or on the sell them on a [inaudible] basis, which is the carcass of the animal, [inaudible] quality of the animal.

AB: Mhm. So what exactly do you look for when you're at auction?

MY: If I'm looking for steers or something like that, I look for the quality, the yield grade, what kind of quality meat I'm getting I'll be getting stuff like that. Cows, you look for health, that it don't have cancer or some kind of disease that will get it condemned. A lot of cow', 'bout more cows get condemned than there used to, because it was a lot more restricted than it used to be.

AB: Hmm.

MY: [inaudible]

AB: So, uh, what are the challenges of being a buyers?

MY: Challenges?

AB: Yeah.

MY: Well, fluctuating market. Uh, there's not as much cattle around as there used be – used to be more cattle around in this part of the country, and now there's a lot less than there used to be, so, we got to get a wider area to supply our suppliers, and supply our customers.



AB: Mhm. So, lemme ask about the customers. Uh, these are packers that your represent, is that right?

MY: Packers and the farmers that feed cattle.

AB: Ah ha.

MY: Buy some calves for different guys who raise calves.

AB: Oh, ok, so, so it's, you also buy, uh, feeder cattle for these feeder lots? Is that right?

MY: Mhm. That's right. Uh ha.

AB: So about what proportion, of of of cattle do you get for for the packers?

MY: About two third packers and one third feeder stock.

AB: Uh hu. Uh, which packers do you represent?

MY: Taylor Excel in Pennsylvania, also couple local ones here, and also one in Georgia.

AB: Which are, within Ohio you're talking about?

MY: Yes.

AB: Which, which are those?

MY: You have Bullians over in Mansfield, that's the biggest one I supply.

AB: Uh hu. Uhm, are are most of the packers outside of Ohio?

MY: Yes.

AB: Why is that, why is that the case?

MY: Oh, because worker's comps are too high in Ohio and I think, uh, Ohio agriculture's hasn't promoted having a slaughter house here in Ohio.

AB: Mhm. So what proportion of a packer's quota is filled through auctions versus contractual, uh, purchases?

MY: Oh, depends what packer you go to, probably mine, we don't contract any cattle, we go to Taylor Excel. They kill up to, up to two thousand a day, and they don't contract anything?

AB: So it's all bought at auction?



MY: Auctions are a private treaty and its not contract ones. We bought it private, but they're not going through auctions, we bought private shipped direct, but they're not on a contract.

AB: What, so could you explain how that works? What are, what are the, um, auctions that a packer has to fill their quota.

MY: Well, farmer says I got fifty steers that [inaudible], so that's forty steers ready to go, and then we agree on a price and then we send 'em in. But they're not contracted, they gonna agree right away. We don't contract them like two or three months ahead of time.

AB: Mhm, Mhm. So you just, you just have a list of of farmers that you, that you go to...

MY: ...representatives some of the markets, some of the market agencies call me and so we have so many cattle, we got this certain person for this price. Are you interested in that, then I come [inaudible] or not.

AB: So, what proportion of, of, the cattle do packers get from, that that, way, or, and, from auctions?

MY: I would say probably, and I go to Pennsylvania Taylor Excel, probably get, uh, two thirds with, uh, the auction, one third... It could, it may be as high as seventy five percent, or seventy five, eighty percent auction, twenty percent direct.

AB: So, uh, are auctions sort of, uh, uh Midwestern phenomenon. Uh, cattle auctions?

MY: No, there's cattle auctions all over the United States.

AB: So, packers do fill, usually, through auctions?

MY: Well because, I'd be down in Kansas or something like that, but feed lots they usually agree, mostly, on a price or contract them ahead of time. So it's different out there. However, in Kansas there is a lot of big auctions in Kansas that just sell feeder cattle.

AB: Mhm. What's, what's your, uh, relationship to Mount Vernon's United Producers?

MY: I've been going there about thirty years.

AB: Thirty years? What's, what's good about it?

MY: Well, it's a market, I get, it's a market that goes on a day that I [inaudible]. We buy cattle from where we can buy cattle from, when we can go there. We try to cover all the sales in Ohio.

AB: Ok, so you mentioned that there isn't enough, uh, cattle available.

MY: Well, we intermingle some, we talk back and forth.



MY: Well, even Mount Vernon's numbers are way down compared to what they used to get. Used to start at nine thirty in the morning and go till nine thirty at night. It's not that way anymore. I think that, because the land is being gobbled up by people either invested in the land or moving out from Columbus and bigger cities, and buying more and more, bigger homes and bigger acreage.

AB: So, uh, do you, have you, you said you, you noted some changes in all auctions, not just the Mount Vernon's United Producer's.

MY: All numbers seem to be down, here in Ohio.

AB: Uh, over what time, over what period have you seen this decrease?

MY: Over the last four, five years.

AB: In the last four, five years? So it's just the developers, is that, is that the biggest factor.

MY: Naw, I think around here there used to be a lot Amish farmers, and now they're [inaudible] producer. And farming there four, five years ago, has, was as profitable – I think in the last the last couple of years it has been more profitable for the farmer. But the land is already gone, so I think we're in, probably a decline in agriculture. I don't like to see this, but looks like we are.

AB: Mhm. So Amish were large producers of cattle before...

MY: Yes, I'd say they were, yes.

AB: Uh hu. And it's just in the last four, five years that they've...

MY: Oh, that's the biggest changes, it's been declining maybe for ten years, but the biggest changes have been in the last four, five years.

AB: Mhm. Is this a population boom that has caused this to happen, or...

MY: I think it's a combination, I think people want more, they go out and buy, uh, five acres and build a house on five acres. I think, you know, the interstates have gobbled up our land, land is going up so much that the big investors have come out and bought the farms, probably [inaudible] invest in the farm. Then they lay dormant with nothing on the land for a while, with no cattle on it. So, it's a combination of things.

AB: Uhm, what contact do you have with the producers?

MY: Producers of the animals?

AB: Yeah. Producers of the animals.

MY: Well, we intermingle some, we talk back and forth.



AB: Uh, what's the difference between, uh, a good producer and a bad producer?

MY: Well, a good producer makes a quality animal, he takes care, he's a good animal husbandry, he goes and makes sure he doesn't have any drugs in his animals. It's been a problem for us, farmers selling animals with drugs in the animals and we tightened up our way. Every time you sell an animal, we have to have a paper signed that saying that it's drug free. And we tightened up that thing very tight. It's, it's something we've gotta watch all the time. A good producer doesn't sell an animal like that.

AB: Uhm, do, do good producers sell consistently, do you get to know a producer, because they provide...

MY: Some of them, some of them...

AB: Uhm. What', what's, what's, uh, what's, uh, good about auctions for a, for a producer? As opp...

MY: You get competitive bids, people come in and bid on your cattle. It's open to anyone to bid on the cattle, and it's, you put the cattle in front of more people to look at.

AB: Do you think there's, uh, declining number of buyers too?

MY: Yes, definitely.

AB: Why is that?

MY: Because we can't make a living doing it. You either have to handle numbers or can't survive. We handle, we make such a low margin on our cattle, that if you can't handle the numbers, you just can't survive.

AB: Were there only two buyers at the auction last Wednesday?

MY: No, there's more buyers than that, but to the cow sales there's only two buyers... But no, they, they, especially on feeder cattle, you have ten, fifteen different people could be bidding on your cattle at one time.

AB: So were you representing other, uh, bidders?

MY: Other buyers, you mean?

AB: Oh yeah, sorry, other buyers.

MY: I had other orders to buy for other people, yes, but not the people that were there, they were bidding for themselves. People that were there at the sale.



AB: Mhm, Mhm. Um, So, uh. Who loses out if, if an auction closes. Like lets say, United Producers closes?

MY: Everybody loses...

AB: What happens?

MY: They have to find, the people who are marketing their cattle need to find another market for it, uhm, the people coming here have to find other markets to buy their cattle from, uhm, people lose their jobs, it doesn't bring as much revenue into the community as it did before... so it's, I think everybody loses. Community loses, everybody loses.

AB: What do you see as the future of auctions?

MY: Well, you might have potential, because I think maybe we might be going a different area. Cattle might be steers, but they might get higher, I think right now, especially, I think the future is going to be ok. The future on the buyers side – auctions are gonna be – it's going to be ok, but it's going to get more competitive, it's gonna be tougher, working on a tighter margin.

AB: So in the last fifteen years, some markets did close...

MY: Yes.

AB: Do you see this a continuing trend?

MY: I hope not. I don't think so, but I, it could be. I don't think so, because it's, I think it's going to. It's possible, but I don't think so.

AB: Do you feel there will be more auctions that'll open up?

MY: No. Definitely more auctions... probably the bigger will get bigger, and the smaller will get smaller, probably.

AB: So what needs to happen for, uh, for, uh, to to...

MY: Survive?

AB: Survive, and producers to be more profitable?

MY: It's a good question. I don't know what's – tighten their belts, and working on closer margins, and just have less people employees and do more work [inaudible] do more work. It's just going to be tough business.

AB: So farmers are going to have to work harder?

MY: No, not farmers. The people who run the auction markets.



AB: Oh. Uh, how so, what do you mean? What would they have to do different?

MY: Watch your margins, and keep your cost down, and all that type of stuff.

AB: So, so do you think auctions now are not, are not running optimally.

MY: Some of them are, some of them are not.

AB: So do they employ too many people, or what's...

MY: No, it's hard, it's hard to employ people, because, it's only one day a week for some auctions, and it's, probably, I, I don't know what they get paid, but it's probably a low pay thing, so you can't afford to do it. You know, so I mean, there's different things that has to be handled that, you know. I, I don't have the complete answer, but I think, you know, we just have to watch our Ps and Qs.

AB: Uh, is there anything else about auctions that you think I should know that I didn't ask about?

MY: Well, it's [inaudible], it's a lot of action, it's interesting, it's, it's just a good way of [inaudible] cattle, you got [inaudible] merchandise cattle. Sometime your cattle bring too much, sometimes they don't bring enough, but on the average, it usually averages out.

AB: Do the prices vary uh, for, uh, depending on the season?

MY: Sometimes.

AB: So, could you sort of tell me, uh, the seasonal changes in market.

MY: Well, feeder cattle, people want 'em more in the spring, they turn on the grass. In the fall, just they sell them in the [inaudible] usually cattle are higher, feeder cattle are higher, especially, in the spring than in the fall. Fed cattle, it depends on the, like people do [inaudible] and stuff like that up, so therefore usually it picks up in the spring with that type of stuff and then, different types of holidays it picks up and also declines on other cuts of meat, so. Different season has something for [inaudible].

AB: Thank you so much.

MY: You're welcome.

AB: A big help.

END